

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, now Senator DASCHLE and Senator GRAHAM will present their amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina.

AMENDMENT NO. 1816

(Purpose: To ensure that members of the Ready Reserve of the Armed Forces are treated equitably in the provision of health care benefits under TRICARE and otherwise under the Defense Health Program)

Mr. GRAHAM of South Carolina. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 1816.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Carolina [Mr. GRAHAM], for Mr. DASCHLE, for himself and Mr. GRAHAM of South Carolina, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. BOND, Mr. BURNS, Mr. WARNER, Mrs. CLINTON, Mr. DEWINE, and Mr. CHAMBLISS proposes an amendment numbered 1816.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, the Senator from South Carolina and I have been negotiating and working with the distinguished manager of the bill regarding an amendment we have been attempting to pass now over the course of this entire session of Congress.

Our view has been from the very beginning that members of the National Guard and Reserves need the opportunity to have access to TRICARE health insurance. And now, on three occasions, the Senate has been on record—with increasing numbers—in support of this concept, this idea that TRICARE ought to be offered to members of the Guard and Reserves.

We have been gratified with the strong bipartisan support that has been indicated with each one of the votes. Our concern, however, is it does not do us much good to continue to pass these measures on the Senate floor only to see the amendments dropped by the time they get to conference.

We want to pass something into law. We want something to be provided to as many of these members of the Guard and Reserves as we possibly can this year. So in trying to figure out what might work best, and in working with the distinguished Senator from Alaska, we have concluded perhaps the best way to do this is to ensure we go to those people who need it the most, that is, those members of the Guard and Reserves who have no health insurance today, and that when members of the Guard and Reserves are called up to active duty, they also are compensated for the TRICARE insurance that would

be provided to them while they are on active duty.

Now, we will say from the very beginning this is not what we would like. We would like to do more, but we know that doing something is better than doing nothing if, in the end, that is what happens.

So I first thank the distinguished Senator from South Carolina for his tenacity and persistence. He has done an outstanding job in working on this issue and has provided great leadership. He has been a very helpful partner. I also say there are Senators on my side of the aisle, Senator LEAHY in particular, and Senator CLINTON, who have been especially helpful in this effort. So I appreciate very much the Senator from Alaska working with us. I am satisfied this is a reasonable compromise.

With that, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM of South Carolina. Mr. President, I will try to be brief.

We have a great team defending America right now. That team is made up of active-duty members who have made a decision to serve 4 years or maybe have a career in the military. But that team is supplemented by the Guard and Reserves. There are 224,000 Guard and Reserve members called up to active duty and, working together, they are doing a great job defending our freedom. It is time to look anew at the role the Guard and Reserves play.

I say to Senator DASCHLE, I want to publicly thank him for making this possible because he has been great to work with, and Senator DEWINE. I think we have been a pretty good team here on the floor. We disagree on a lot, and there will be a lot of fussing and fighting before this bill is over with, but that is the American way. It is OK to express our differences. It is great to be able to tell people you disagree. There are a lot of countries where there are not many ways to express your disagreements. But one of the things we have done tonight, and I think in the spirit of the country, is to come together to support our men and women who serve.

So why do we need this? One-fourth of the Guard and Reserves are on active duty now, with more to come. We need to acknowledge the obvious. They will be asked to do more, not less, over the coming months and years. Why? The cold war model of having tanks in the Fulda Gap and a large nuclear deterrent force standing up against the former Soviet Union, that war, thank goodness, is in the history books for the most part.

The new war, the war on terrorism, has a totally different dynamic. The Guard and Reserves, which were tangential, to be honest with you, in the cold war are in the forefront of this war on terrorism. Most of your military police are guards and reservists. Seventy-five percent of the aircrews

flying C-130s—and I know our Presiding Officer knows this because we took nine trips in the theater of Afghanistan and Iraq. Eight of the crews are Guard crews, one is a Reserve crew. Seventy-five percent of the people flying C-130s are Guard and Reserves. Fifty-five percent of the people flying airlift to get the supplies and resources into the region to protect our troops and help them survive are reservists. Almost 90 percent of the intelligence service for the Army is in the Reserves, 90 percent is civil affairs Reserves. It is growing by leaps and bounds.

What we are trying to do tonight is provide a better benefit package than they have had before because we are going to ask so much of the Guard and Reserves.

Senator STEVENS made this possible. We have passed two bills by 80-plus votes, but there is no money behind it. For all those who follow the Senate, they know who is in charge of the money. Senator STEVENS made this possible because we are putting money behind the bill.

What does that mean? It is no longer talk. Twenty percent—2 out of 10 people—who are Guard and Reserves are without health care. This bill immediately will allow them to have health care year round. They will pay a premium like a retiree would pay, but they will have health care by being a member of the Guard or Reserves.

We need to do more, and we will. The problem of a Guard or Reserve family goes like this: If you are called up to active duty for a year, you go into the military health care system called TRICARE. If you have health care in the private sector, most times—almost all the time—your physician network is replaced. You go from the private health care sector to the military health care sector. And when you get deactivated, you change, and there is no continuity of health care. Thirty percent of the people called to active duty were unable to be deployed because of health care problems.

We are not done yet. There is more to do. It is my goal, my hope, my dream, for the Guard and Reserve forces that if you will join, and you will participate, and you will help defend America as a guard or reservist, we will offer you full-time health care. You pay a premium, but you and your family will be taken care of in the health care area. I think it is the least we could do. I think it is what we should do. And tonight is a huge step forward.

I thank all of the Senators who made it possible. The fussing, the fighting yet to come on this bill is part of America. But let it be said at about 8:50 at night, Republicans and Democrats came together to help Guard and Reserve members. When you are in a war, they do not ask you if you are a Republican or a Democrat. They are asking you to do your job. So I am honored to be part of this effort.

I ask unanimous consent that Senator HAGEL and Senator ALLEN be added as cosponsors.